SAMARITAN SCRIBAL HABITS WITH REFERENCE TO
THE MASORAH AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

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The discovery of the Qumran scrolls and the identification among them
of proto-Samaritan text types has led to a resurgence of interest in
the Samaritan Pentateuch and its value as a witness to the state of
the text in the late pre-Christian eras. The current tendency is to at-
tribute the *stabilisation* of the Samaritan text-type to the period from
the second century C.E. onwards¹ but the value of the text as a witness
in the pre-Christian era is not yet subject to a consensus of opinion.²

Until recently, the discussion has focussed on the text of the
Samaritan Pentateuch and its relationship to the Hebrew masoretic
and the Septuagint versions. The structure of the Pentateuch, that
is, in the broadest sense of the term, the Samaritan masorah, the
form and layout of the Pentateuch in which the words are presented
to the reader, had not been found to be a suitable object of study,
nor consequently, a source of evidence in the prime discussion until
Emanuel Tov's extended work on the format of the Qumran scrolls.
Tov has found the need to refer to the traditions employed in copy-
ing the Samaritan Pentateuch, but apart from Tov's work few schol-
ars have taken account of Samaritan masoretic traditions other than
a small coterie of Samaritan scholars. Moses Gaster³ drew attention
to the parallels between the section structures of the Samaritan
Pentateuch and the *petuhot* and *setumot* in the Jewish masoretic text
and to the lectional arrangement in *parashiyot*. However his words

¹ See B. K. Waltke, “Prolegomena to the Samaritan Pentateuch,” Harvard Ph.D.
(1965) especially pp. 86 and 132.
² Ibid. Introduction, pp. 1–41 for a discussion of older and contemporary views
until 1965. More recently Emanuel Tov has made extensive comparisons between
the scrolls and the Samaritan Pentateuch and has demonstrated the antiquity of
the characteristics of the latter, See, for example, E. Tov, “Sense Divisions in the
Qumran Texts, the Masoretic Text and Ancient Translations of the Bible,” in *The
Interpretation of the Bible*, The International Symposium in Slovenia ed. Joze Krasovac
JSOTSup 289; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 121–46.
*Studies and Texts* 1 (Ktav reprint: New York, 1973), 503–600. See also his “Massoreti-
sches im Samaritanischen” reprinted from the Nöldeke Festschrift, in *Studies and
Texts* 1, 614–37.
were by way of a preface to a study of the lections read by the Samaritans and they seem to have been ignored until recently.4

B. K. Waltke seems to summarise a widely-held view in his doctoral thesis in which he wrote: “It is obvious that no school of Masoretes arose among the Samaritans.”5 In clear contrast Z. Ben-Hayyim observed:6 “We can glimpse an independent scientific activity of early Samaritan Masoretes and grammarians which was by no means confined to the point discussed here,’ with which statement he noted his change of mind on this question.

Both of these opposing views were propounded after detailed scrutinies of the evidence which, in Waltke’s case, included recourse to a computer survey of the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and a thorough appraisal of the work of his predecessors and, in Ben-Hayyim’s case, an opinion resulting from a life-long accumulation and intensive study of evidence. Waltke’s conclusion seems to have been strengthened by the fact that in the earliest of the Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts available to him he could see no signs of ongoing masoretic activity, at least as far as textual correction is concerned. It is Ben-Hayyim’s view that the system of representing the vowels in Samaritan sacred texts developed after a period of masoretic activity which followed its own line of development from a common ancestry with the Jewish traditions.7 Ben-Hayyim suggests that the creative period of the masorah of the Samaritans was in the era when they used Aramaic as their vernacular, a conclusion for which support might be adduced from other sources.8 Written evidence for establishing a history of Samaritan literature is not abundant for the

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5 “Prolegomena,” 65.
7 Ibid. p. 526. He discusses this matter further at various places in LOT.